



12 Report

THE
BOARD OF HEALTH

For the City and Suburbs of Glasgow, have, in conformity with what was resolved at their formation, gone on silently, and with the view not unnecessarily to increase alarm in the public mind; but now, that Cholera is no longer distant, they deem it proper to present the following

REPORT.

THE first matter which attracted the attention of the Board was the prevalence of Typhus Fever to a great extent, and in a form unusually virulent. The inadequacy of the accommodation at the Royal Infirmary, for patients labouring under that disease, was matter of serious consideration. To supply this want, the Board gave early attention, and obtained a lease, for one year, at a moderate rent, of a large Cotton Mill at Mile-End, which they have fitted up, in a very comfortable and suitable manner, for Fever cases, and also for the treatment of Cholera, should it be necessary to use it for that purpose. The requisite establishment of Medical Officers and Servants was appointed, and this Hospital, capable of containing one hundred and forty patients, was opened on the 7th January. It was rapidly filled; and the treatment of patients has been followed with much success.

Connected with this department a plan was adopted by the Commissioners of Police, under the sanction of the Board of Health, to use means for disinfecting bed-clothes, and to fumigate every house in which fever had prevailed. The process is still in operation on an extensive scale, and on scientific principles, sanctioned by the Medical Committee, at a meeting where the Professor of

Chemistry in the University was present.* A due supply of soap was also furnished for washing bed-clothes. The closses and stairs in the crowded parts of the city were cleaned; and houses were white-washed to the number of above two thousand. Coals also were furnished in cases where they were deemed necessary.

Another part of duty, naturally devolving on the Board, was to promote public cleanliness, by the removal of nuisances, at all times prejudicial to health, but peculiarly so during the existence of epidemics. The Commissioners of Police of the city and suburbs turned their attention early to this object, and innumerable flagrant nuisances were detected, such as pig-sties in crowded situations, large deposites of manure, ill constructed dung-steadings, collections of bones, and other putrifying substances. Of these many were removed by the owners themselves, others were removed by compulsory measures, under the authority of the Dean of Guild Court, and the Magistrates in the city and neighbourhood. It is hoped that the measures now adopted will not only be beneficial in the present emergency, but will also accustom the public in future to a more scrupulous attention to cleanliness and salubrity.

It is obvious that in the formation of a Board of Health, members of the medical profession must constitute a most essential part: therefore, at a meeting held on the 12th December, formed of a sub-committee of the Board, and a great number of medical gentlemen, summoned for the purpose, it was unanimously resolved, That all the members of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons residing in Glasgow, willing to give their professional assistance in cases of Cholera, should be considered as constituent members of the General Board.

* The disinfecting liquor for clothes is chloride of lime, dissolved in twenty times its weight of water. The disinfecting gas, for apartments, is chlorine disengaged from the chloride of lime by sulphuric acid. The gas is diffused through the room; not applied to the walls. The walls are washed with new slaked lime.

But as it would have been productive of much inconvenience that all the members should be called to every meeting, it was agreed that a Medical Committee should be formed, to attend along with the other Committee of the Board, and to give their advice and assistance in all matters of a professional nature. The Medical Committee have their own Convener and Secretary, and hold independent meetings when they may think necessary.

It was, from the first formation of the Board, considered to be a matter of absolute necessity, to furnish Hospitals for the reception of destitute patients, who had no facilities, or means of cure, in their own habitations, if, unfortunately, Cholera visited the city or suburbs. The Board invited, by advertisements in the newspapers, the owners of tenements to make offer of leases of their properties, but a strong and general aversion was expressed, and the Board thus experienced, in different ways, very considerable difficulty, and have encountered many obstacles. Indeed, on various occasions, when the Board thought the transaction about to be concluded, it was broken off from the dread of occupation of the property as an Hospital.

Having obtained the opinion of gentlemen of acknowledged medical skill,* that the Old Police Office Buildings were well calculated for a Cholera Hospital, and that such a use of them would not be detrimental to the health of the neighbourhood, the Board adopted the resolution thus to employ them. They are now finished, and are capable of accommodating not fewer than sixty-six patients, with comfort and convenience to the patients, and with every facility for the treatment of the disease.

Following up the Hospital arrangements, the Board have availed themselves of an offer which Mr. William Brown, with great liberality, made them of an area and large brick building belonging to him, situated in the Old Wynd, and

* See Appendix.

formerly occupied as a cooperage. The building is in the course of preparation, and will contain forty patients. The Board, having no opportunity of making a selection, have accepted this offer, under the guarantee of the opinion of the Medical Committee of the Board, and on the conviction that it is in a quarter of the city where much disease is engendered, and where, it is to be feared, that Cholera may prevail, if it should visit this city. The Board, therefore, in accepting and fitting up the building, have been influenced by the consideration of the great facility with which diseased persons, in that district, can be conveyed to it. Other places for Hospitals, in this city, are in view, and will be immediately fitted up when it shall be seen what character the epidemic may assume among us.

As it was necessary to have Hospital accommodation both in the Suburbs and City, the Town Hall of Anderston has been fitted up by the Magistrates of that Burgh, at the expense of this Board, for the reception of Cholera patients.

It will accommodate thirty.

The Magistrates of Gorbals are in the course of obtaining an Hospital to contain forty patients in that district. Depositories for medicines and clothing have been provided, and that Barony has been divided into fifteen districts, to each of which a sufficient number of Surgeons has been attached.

The Board have provided an Hospital in Calton, capable of accommodating sixty patients; and the Magistrates of that Burgh, have appointed Depots for medicines, clothing, and Medical appointments.

Thus Hospital accommodation has been provided to the following amount,

Mile-End,	140	
Old Police Office,	66	
Old Wynd,	40	
Anderston,	30	
Gorbals,	40	
Calton,	60	
		376 Total.

Litters have been provided in the different districts for the conveyance of the patients from their houses to the Hospitals, in a horizontal position ; and the Board are much indebted to Convener Maclellan, and Baillie Burn, for their respective contributions of a very suitable and well contrived carriage and bed, and of a horse and harness, by which patients can be conveyed in a horizontal position, with ease, safety, and rapidity.

The next branch was the establishment of Depositories in the city, for the dispensation of every article necessary for the treatment and comfort of persons affected with Cholera. One is situated at 120, George Street, another at 235, Gallowgate, a third at 115, King Street, and a fourth at 245, Argyle Street, and it is intended that, as soon as Cholera may appear in this City, persons shall always be in waiting there, to contribute their own services and to summon with the greatest rapidity, the Medical gentlemen to the attendance of the sick, and to furnish the medicines, cordials, and clothing, which may be required. These establishments will be increased in number should circumstances require such extension.

It is well known, that the liability to infectious diseases is much increased from the want of proper clothing. The attention of the Board, therefore, was early drawn to this consideration, and particularly to the state of patients discharged from the Fever Hospital at Mile-End. A Clothing Committee was therefore appointed, with discretionary powers, and at the same time a letter was drawn up, printed, and circulated, inviting the public to furnish such articles of cast-off clothing as might be thought useful to the poor. The distribution of these articles is placed in the hands of a Committee, and will be in immediate operation ; and the Board will be enabled to state in their next Report, the extent to which they have been enabled to supply them.

As it has been proven by fatal experience, that Cholera, and other infectious diseases, have been carried from one

place to another, by beggars, the Board have considered it to be their duty, to take very active measures for the suppression of public begging in the City and Barony of Glasgow; and they earnestly entreat the Community at large, to abstain from giving indiscriminate alms, by which is meant, alms to beggars who are unknown, and as to whom no inquiry is previously made. Such indiscriminate acts, give encouragement to the system of begging, and thereby, increase the diffusion of epidemic infection, and endanger the public health. It has been ascertained, that not one fifth part of the beggars, who have of late infested the City and Suburbs, belonged even to the Shire: and whilst it shall be the endeavour of the Board, to banish from the City, all stranger beggars, they have attempted to put those who really have a claim on the City, and who seem to beg from necessity, upon a course of obtaining relief.

The Board have, also, unanimously agreed to appropriate part of the funds entrusted to their management, towards the relief of convalescent fever patients, and of individuals and families labouring under poverty, from the pressure of disease.

In order to facilitate the operations of the Board, the General Commissioners of Police have kindly agreed to form themselves into separate Ward Committees, assuming the Resident Commissioners—the Elders of the Establishment and Dissenting Churches—and such a number of respectable individuals as may be willing, for the recommending and fixing upon the proper persons, either as individuals or families, who may participate in the distribution of the clothing and such other necessaries as the Board may dispense.

At a meeting, on the 30th of January, to which the whole medical practitioners were summoned, and at which a great number of the medical gentlemen attended, it was unanimously agreed that all should give their best and cordial services, in the event of Cholera making its appearance; and to render these services more effectual, it was resolved, That a proper number of medical practitioners should be attached to each

district. Following up this, there will be published and placarded the names and residences of the practitioners who have engaged to serve for each of the districts, respectively; so that the poor, as well as those whose duty it is to superintend their concerns, may know at once, where ready assistance can be obtained.

The Board are quite conscious that the duty they have undertaken is one of great responsibility. The execution of it is surrounded with difficulties which cannot be explained within the limits of a Report such as this; and, while the Board shall endeavour to act as conscientious stewards, of a generous community who have placed the funds at their disposal, they trust that the public will look to the proceedings of the Board with a just consideration of the many difficulties with which they have been met. Let it be recollected that in this city and suburbs, there is not only typhus fever existing to a great extent, but also the dread of approaching Cholera. The Board, therefore, in relation to both diseases, could not adopt with safety to the community generally, any measures which would have the effect of bringing together multitudes, even for the purpose of receiving public, and to a certain extent, indiscriminate charity. But the Board have taken the proper measures for ascertaining and contributing to the wants of those who are truly necessitous. Of all this the public may rest assured. The Board have postponed the use of soup kitchens, as they might, under existing circumstances, have rather increased, than diminished disease, by drawing together, and exposing to the weather, many persons, young and old, labouring under Typhus, and thus spreading one distemper of a very serious character in their anxiety to avert another. Moreover, the Board, by careful inquiry at the different Kirk-sessions and elders, have ascertained that *general* distress does not exist among the poorer classes, and as already stated, the Board have taken measures to provide for, and assist the truly necessitous.

The Board will from time to time put forth a Report as

circumstances seem to require; and, in conclusion, they beg to state, that they have kept a most watchful eye on the surrounding districts, and wherever disease has existed or even been suspected, they have considered it to be their duty to take the most efficient measures for the prevention and the cure of the existing malady. In acting thus, they do not think that they have travelled beyond the limits of their duty, as they have thereby rendered efficient assistance to the afflicted, and have contributed to the utmost of their power in preventing the spread of a disease so justly alarming.

ROBERT DALGLISH, *Chairman.*

GLASGOW, }
8th February, 1832. }

APPENDIX.

Glasgow, 24th January, 1832.

WE, the Subscribers, Members of the Medical Committee of the Board of Health, hereby certify, that this day we visited and inspected the tenement formerly occupied by the Police Establishment, and now in preparation for an Hospital.

We are satisfied that the building is well fitted for the intended purpose, and, in our opinion, were it occupied by patients affected with Cholera, persons inhabiting or frequenting the neighbourhood, would not run, on that account, any hazard of infection.

(Signed)

JOHN BURNS, M. D.
J. BALMANNO, M.D.
THOMAS THOMSON, M.D.
JOHN GIBSON.
JAMES ADAIR LAWRIE, M.D.
ALEXANDER PANTON, M.D.
JOHN SPITTAL, M.D.
JAMES CORKINDALE, M.D.

Glasgow, 6th February, 1832.

WE, the Subscribers, Members of the Medical Committee of the Board of Health, hereby certify, that this day we inspected and carefully examined an unemployed cooperage, situated in the Old Wynd, now in preparation for an Hospital.

We are of opinion, that the tenement is well fitted for the intended purpose; and we are satisfied, that were it occupied by patients affected with Cholera, the inhabitants in the neighbourhood would not, from this source, be exposed to the hazard of infection.

(Signed)

JOHN BURNS, M.D.
JOHN GIBSON.
J. BALMANNO, M.D.
JOHN SPITTAL, M.D.
JAMES CORKINDALE, M.D.
ROBERT BADENACH, M.D. Staff Surgeon.

